

CN gift supports railroad program grad students

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAY COMPANY (CN) ESTABLISHED A \$400,000 ENDOWMENT this spring to support graduate education in the Railroad Engineering Program. CN company representatives announced the gift April 4 to a gathering of students, CEE faculty, and friends of the department during one of Associate Professor Chris Barkan's railroad engineering classes in Grainger Engineering Library Information Center. The endowment will support two graduate students each year.

"I'm extremely proud to be here," said Peter C. Marshall, vice-president of CN's Gulf Division.

"This is a really important event for us. We want to be part of a first-class effort in railroad engineering and in civil engineering."

Marshall mentioned CN's 1999 merger with Illinois Central Corporation and talked about CN's "rags to riches" story, in which the company went from losing \$100 million a year to its current position as "the most productive, most efficient, best cash flow, most profitable on a unit basis" railroad in North America.

"It happened because of the individuals that are working at the railroad," Marshall said. "Steel and electronics and



Professor and Head Nicholas P. Jones (left) accepts the CN gift from Peter Marshall, vice-president of CN's Gulf Division.

technology only take you so far, and everyone's got pretty much the same kinds of tools to work with. It's the quality of the people who are making those tools come to life, the interaction with customers, and the interaction amongst ourselves that really have made the difference. It's for those reasons that we feel really strongly about reaching out into the community and aligning ourselves with the absolute best in the business. You folks represent that here at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign."

CEE Professor and Head Nicholas P. Jones thanked CN for a generous investment in education.

"I like to think that this is just the start of this relationship, that with this as a starting point, we'll continue to grow and develop a deeper relationship with CN, driven by both our educational mission and our research mission, and I look forward to participating in that," Jones said. "This is a generous and significant

From left to right: Chris Barkan, Nicholas P. Jones, Peter Marshall and David Lowe.

commitment on the part of CN to this program. It is critically important to us, and on behalf of the University, the College of Engineering and the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, I would like to personally thank CN for their generosity."

Railroad Engineering Program Director Associate Professor Chris Barkan spoke on the long legacy of railroad engineering at Illinois. He credited its enduring success to those who helped build and sustain it over the years: professors William W. Hay and Ernest J. Barenberg; former College of Engineering Dean William Schowalter; current Dean David Daniel; and alumnus Mike Franke of AMTRAK.

"My reason for acknowledging all of these individuals today, of course, is that without the vision, efforts and dedication of any one of them, I think there is a considerable doubt that we still would have a railroad engineering program at Illinois, and without that, I'm not sure we'd be here today to thank CN for their generous gift in support of our mission to educate the next generation of railroad engineering professionals."

Department alumnus David Lowe (MS 77), Head of Engineering for CN's Gulf Division, also spoke to the class about the importance of developing both engineering and leadership skills during their time at Illinois.

"Join something like the concrete canoe team," Lowe said. "You're working with a diverse set of people, you've got a time schedule, you've got to look for funds, make sure you get your checks in on time, make sure you send your checks off, look for the right kind of material. You have an engineering challenge designing it, but the big part is learning to work as a team, working together, and when it's all done you get to go play in the water and beat up on other schools. As students here, work to seek out such similar opportunities to work on those leadership skills." 

